

Grow as We Go

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Date: 05 July 2026

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[0 : 00] Good. Well, we're going to turn now to our Bibles. And if you need a Bible, do pick one up. There's some at the sides, at the back, at the front. Plenty of visitors' Bibles for you.

And we're going to be reading together this morning and for the next couple of Sunday mornings in Peter's second letter, looking at the first chapter. And then later on after the summer, we're going to come back and look a bit more at some of the rest of this letter.

But this morning, I'm going to read the whole of chapter 1, although our focus is going to be on the first section up to chapter 1, verse 11.

But let's read the whole chapter together. Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence.

[1 : 18] And by which he has granted us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue and virtue with knowledge and knowledge with self-control and self-control with steadfastness and steadfastness with godliness and godliness with brotherly affection and brotherly affection with love.

For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he's blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure.

For if you practice these qualities, you will never fall. For in this way, there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

[2 : 45] Therefore, I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. I think it right as long as I'm in the body to stir you up by way of reminder.

Since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus made clear to me. And I will make every effort so that after my departure, you may be able at any time to recall these things. For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. But we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was born to him by the majestic glory, this is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased, we ourselves heard this very voice born from heaven.

For we were with him on the holy mountain. And we have something more sure. The prophetic word to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

[3 : 59] Knowing this, first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. But no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man.

But men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. Amen. And may God bless to us his word.

Well, good morning. Please do turn in your Bibles back to 2 Peter chapter 1. And that's on page 1018 of the Church Bible.

Knowledge always leads to some kind of action. What we know to be true, what we believe, always causes us to behave, to act, to think in certain ways.

In a church like ours, you come quite quickly to marvel at how the brains of babies and toddlers develop. They take in what is going on around them long before we realize.

[5 : 08] They store and process knowledge long before they can articulate it. And it's amazing, and this never happens on a Sunday morning, don't worry. But on a Sunday evening, the tables at the back with tea and coffee, they've often got more than tea and coffee on them.

And you can watch an 18-month-old, really, the very young, walk up to that table. And they'll reach over their heads. Because they know that in that bowl on the table is something sweet, something good.

It's not meant for them. But they know it's there. They know they can grasp for it. They've grown in knowledge. And that knowledge has led them to action.

Mostly harmless action, I think. Sorry to the parents. The Apostle Peter, he is writing this letter to a church which is very concerned with knowledge.

Because they are at risk of coming under the threatening influence of teachers who claim to know even more than them about the way of truth.

[6 : 15] Clever teachers who have come into the church. And their action, their knowledge has led them to action. Action which Peter will tell us in chapter 2 has made them like irrational animals.

Creatures of instinct, blots and blemishes, insatiable for sin. Made them to be like waterless springs. These teachers seem to be very clever.

They seem to have a lot of knowledge and they've grown in knowledge. But look at what it has made them. Peter wants us to know that knowledge of the truth must go right alongside the way of righteousness.

That we must be growing in the knowledge of God. But that can never lead to the kind of growing these people have been doing. No, growing rightly in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus will lead to lives which more and more display the way of righteousness, of goodness.

In the church and in the world. And so over the next few weeks we're going to be in chapter 1 of 2 Peter. A letter all about what it means to grow in the Christian life.

[7 : 37] As together we wait for the coming again of the Lord in glory. And so this morning we're going to take verses 1 to 11 and see that in these days of waiting we are to grow as we go on in the Christian life.

So let's begin with verses 1 and 2 where we see that Peter is concerned that they know, the church know, they have a faith of equal standing.

Peter is writing to a church or perhaps a group of churches and he begins with this great encouragement. Look at verse 1. Look at how he addresses these Christian believers.

He writes to those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours. He's writing with the authority of an apostle. But he wants his recipients to know that his faith and their faith they are of the same standing.

This will be very important for what he comes on to say but right at the start this is how he begins. There is no multi-tier Christian faith where some, well they have access to a different faith through their specialist knowledge, through their expertise.

[8 : 53] No, Peter says it's not the case that the apostles are here and then professors and church leaders and everyone else on a sliding scale. No, as Christians together in the church we share an equally great faith.

Because notice how this faith has been obtained. It has been obtained by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. The faith that we share together as a church, we've all received it in the same way ultimately.

Some of us grew up coming to know the Lord Jesus. Some came into church last year, last month, this very Sunday morning.

Some came through great personal tragedy to the Lord Jesus. But no matter the means by which we come, Peter wants us to know that we all have a faith of equal standing.

We all stand together before God, not because of our knowledge or our ability or our expertise or our heritage, but only because the righteousness of the Lord Jesus has been counted to us.

[10 : 06] The perfect goodness, His righteousness has been gifted to us. His right standing before God has been made ours. And so nothing can be added to that.

All Christians together share that faith of equal standing. It might be tempting for us to think that Peter, well, he was special.

He was an apostle. Well, Peter wants to rebuff that idea. His faith and our faith have an equal standing before God. And maybe it's not the apostles.

Maybe it's someone you know, someone in church circles, someone you've heard online who just seems to have more knowledge, more experience, more expertise than you.

It can be very tempting when we feel like that to feel inferior. Well, there are varying levels of knowledge and experience in the church. And we want to use people effectively, but that does not change the standing of our faith before God.

[11:13] We all have a faith of equal standing. For our faith has been obtained by the righteousness of Christ. A faith which declares us to be right before God.

And I find that a very great comfort because how often we can feel a bit small, a bit weak, a bit inferior to others.

Now, we must. We must, as we'll see, all be growing. But we have a faith of equal standing with the apostle Peter and so with all Christian believers.

And so, verse 2, Peter gives his great desire for all believers that grace and peace would multiply to them in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

He doesn't want grace and peace merely to remain with them or to come to them afresh. No, he wants it to multiply among them. That means real growth, multiplication.

[12:19] And that theme of growth comes up right through the letter. We started our service with these words. The very end of the letter, 3, verse 18. Peter's final command, grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

That is Peter's great desire for the church. Because growth, growth really does matter. Going on in the Christian faith, growing into our faith is of great concern.

It would be troubling, wouldn't it, if one of those 18 months old reaching above their own head to get some chocolate was still doing that when they're 18 years old. No, we, we are to go on in the Christian faith.

To lay hold to all that is rightly ours. To see that grace and peace multiplied to us. And that's quite exciting. To think that in a month's time, in a year's time, in a decade's time, we will know more about the Lord.

His grace, His peace will be multiplied in us. And I'm sure you can think how that's been true in your own life if you're a Christian believer here this morning.

[13:42] Because as I learn more about the Lord, I see my sinfulness more and more. His grace multiplies in me. As we live and endure in this fallen world together, the peace of the Lord becomes more vital, more urgent for our souls.

But that call, that call to see grace and peace multiplied in us is a high calling. Too much to do on our own.

And so in verses three and four, Peter wants us to see a present power and future promises that make this possible. So first, verse three, a present power.

God's divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. Everything we need for life, everything we need to grow in godliness has been granted to us.

It's been given to us through the knowledge of God who called us to His own glory and excellence. And that means God has given us, given His church all that we need for all of life to grow in godliness.

[15:00] And we know that God has made Himself known through His revelation to us, through His word, through the scriptures. And so this means that all we need for life, all we need to grow through life, to grow, to look more and more like the Lord Jesus is to be found in His revelation to us through His word.

That's something that Peter will return to, but for now, see what a confidence that can give us as Christian believers. We are not those who search around in the sand, who gaze into the stars, who scour the books of philosophy, who seek some kind of spiritual guru.

know all that we need for life and godliness has been granted to us. And that is a tremendous help in the day-to-day because there were those in Peter's day and there are those today who want to add to God's revelation.

Not perhaps to come out and directly contradict it, but to go beyond it, to go into speculation, into holding some truth or some practice as vital and important, saying that we need something new, something extra, if we are to know how to live today.

Dick Lucas writes so helpfully on these verses, saying, if there is a major scientific, artistic, moral, or philosophical question, or even a matter of personal decision-making which the Bible does not address, then we have to assume that although it may be intriguing and important from a human perspective, it is irrelevant to the quest for a godly life.

[16:47] For Christians can become terribly speculative. We can speculate about things which God's word does not tell us and we can let those things fill our minds, take up our attention.

The things of so-called knowledge which drive our energy to grow in faith. But in God's word, in his very revelation to us, we come to see what is good and right.

We come to see what leads to life. And his word really does speak to all of life. He's given us his word through our knowledge of him, through his revelation.

It was Mark Twain, the American author, who is first credited with saying that it ain't those parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me.

It's the parts that I do understand. He was speaking as a skeptic to the Christian faith, but that is very often true for Christians as well. We can occupy our time with sideline questions of knowledge when God has granted to us all that we need for life and for godliness.

[18:04] And he's given us our life to live and to grow in, to battle each day, to put sin to death in our flesh, to pursue righteousness, to serve God, to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, pleasing and holy before him.

And that is hard. That's a very real battle day to day. Much easier, isn't it, to forget about that, to pretend that there is no judgment coming, that sin doesn't matter, and instead to pursue some kind of knowledge.

But no, we really can get on with the Christian life, the daily battle, because God has given us all that we need to do so. He's given us his power and he's given his church all that we need together. And verse 4, God has granted to us his very great promises. For while we have a present power, we also have future promises. For all that God promises in his word has not yet fully been fulfilled. For, verse 4, through his promises, through his precious and very great promises, promises, we will become partakers in the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

[19:31] The promise of the scripture is not only that we will see God, but we shall become more and more like him. John writes in his first letter, Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared, but we know that when he appears, we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is.

Now, much could be said about this, but see what Peter, see what John, see what the Bible is telling us. What will be in the end will be in many senses very different to what we have now. We won't become gods, we'll always be creatures, but we shall be perfect. We shall be able to take part in the life, in the rule and reign of God in a way in which we can't now.

And why? Well, because then and there we will have escaped the corruption of this world. Some Christians want to imagine that we've already escaped the corruption of this world.

They have an over-realized view of the end, saying that all God has promised is here and now. That's the kind of view that the false teachers in Peter's day seem to be teaching.

[20:58] And it leads very often not to a fruitful and effective Christian life, but to the kind of immoral behavior that Peter goes on to have to address later in his letter because there is no end.

There is no judgment in their view. Christ is not coming back. No, we need to be very wary of those whose eyes are not fixed on the end, who never speak of the great hope that we have in the end. Beware those who speak and who live as if here and now is everything, as if this world is it forever. forever. Because just think what that leads to.

If this is it, if this is your best life now, then your every desire is good and right. Your every action is perfect. There is no judgment coming.

There is no end. And it can seem quite difficult to imagine how people can believe that in this world. In a world which is full of sin and hatred and murder and strife and war on the global scale and in our own lives.

[22 : 13] And in a world where death remains. But day to day we can numb ourselves to that reality as well, can't we? Perhaps you're here this morning and you're not yet following the Lord Jesus.

Well, can I encourage you, if that's you, to examine the world in which you live. There is so much to bring us joy, family, and work and leisure. Lots and lots of good things.

And yet, even these good things, they can bring us pain and difficulty at times. Because this world is not it. We long for more because the Bible tells us God has put eternity into our hearts.

We know that there is more. And Christians are not those whose heads are in the clouds. No, we are those who see the world rightly and honestly and so hope for and long for eternity.

We long for the day when we will have escaped the brokenness of this present world, the brokenness which is brought about by our own sin. God's and so we can have very real confidence as we go about the Christian life day to day, as we work together as the church, as we witness and as we worship.

[23 : 33] for all we need for life and godliness has been granted to us by the power of God. We know that this is not it.

No, we cling to the precious and very great promises of God's word, which tell us the best is yet to come. But Peter, Peter doesn't want to leave us in the future.

No, he wants to make us fruitful and effective in the here and now. And so he says having these very great promises must make us active in our faith now.

It is because of God's very great and precious promises that verses 5 to 11, we are to make every effort. Look down at verse 5.

For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith. Now perhaps those words make alarm bells ring in your head, but don't worry, Peter is not a personal trainer promising you a supplement that can transform your life and your mindfulness.

[24 : 39] No, Peter has told us we already have all we need for life and godliness. There is nothing else to add. He's not talking about supplementing the faith.

That would be adding to God's word, adding to his revelation, adding beliefs or practices. that would be an addition, a distortion of Christianity. Rather, he says, supplementing your faith.

And indeed, it's important to remember that Peter is writing to the church together. God's gift of faith has made us right before him. And now, obedience to Jesus' lordship in all is to be worked out.

And that means all of life. That means together as a church, we work that out together. The word supplement here has the idea of a generous benefactor, giving to a cause without thinking of the cost.

And how wonderful a place the church is when together we serve God, we serve each other without thinking of the cost to ourselves.

[25 : 53] When the priorities of God's word become our priorities. Just think of some of the teams who got this building ready for us to worship this morning.

Now, this is non-exhaustive. So, apologies to anyone that's not on this list. But we've got the cleaning team. They came in yesterday morning to make sure the building is ready for us. The musicians, those preparing tea and coffee, the guys on the sound desk, those down in creche, and many, many more.

I can't examine their hearts, but what a wonderful thing it is when they serve without thinking of the cost. The cost might seem relatively trivial, getting out of bed a bit earlier than they'd perhaps want. The cleaning team perhaps missing something else yesterday morning. They might seem trivial, but the Lord is delighted when we serve him without thinking of the cost to ourselves.

Because if we can take those minor things, those minor costs, then we will be much more willing, much more prepared to endure greater cost. need to be more than we have to passed over for promotion to a more public role in the firm because of your faith, because of the church that you belong to, or when, like some of our ministry partners across the world, you're shunned by society, cast out of homes and families and buildings for growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus and making that known.

[27 : 30] And so we get this list of virtues which we are to grow in, verses 5 and 6. We are to grow in these without thinking of the cost to ourselves. Supplement your faith, verse 5, with virtue.

Virtue with knowledge, knowledge with self-control, self-control with steadfastness, steadfastness with godliness, godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.

I wonder as you consider that list, what do you think? Well, these are qualities, beautiful qualities, which are seen in the one who has called us to himself, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And yet we, as his followers, are to grow in them as well. Now, no one has arrived, no one's got there with this list, completed it, but look around the room this morning.

I'm sure we can all see some who seem to be far ahead of us in this. Dear older saints who have spent decades growing in love. I lead the ministry in the church to students and young workers.

[28 : 46] Many of them are away for the summer, but it's good to see many still around. And there is, I think, a particular challenge to them and perhaps to others amongst us.

Because there is a youthful zeal for knowledge in the Christian faith. A zeal to know more. And that has its right place, but young men, what are we growing in?

Are we growing in knowledge of that ancient theologian or that online personality? They might well have much good knowledge to share.

But knowledge for the sake of knowledge is not what Peter is prizing here. No, Peter has in mind a knowledge which turns us outwards, which leads us towards God's people.

A knowledge which leads to brotherly affection, something you can't practice on your own. To selfless love, something you can't practice on your own. So how does our growing knowledge of God make us love his people more?

[30 : 01] Because it ought to. As we see that God has made us right with himself and united us to himself, we also see that we are united with his people in the church.

And that turns us away from ourselves and points us towards them. It makes us want to be with his people, to encourage his people, to love his people.

But for some, knowledge can lead to introspection, to isolation, to stepping away. It would be, I think, a very sad thing, wouldn't it, if the first word that people use to describe the church, was knowledgeable.

Because if that were to happen, then I think we can read between the lines. The subtext is plain to see knowledgeable, but not loving. The knowledge on its own is dangerous.

So-called knowledge appearing to be very clever is what lies behind so much of the false teaching in this letter. They claim to have a knowledge, a knowledge which has not led them to be self-controlled, but has made them like irrational animals.

[31 : 17] Knowledge which has not led them to godliness, but has made them a curse. Knowledge which has not led them to brotherly affection and to love, but to scoffing at the brothers.

And yet, look around the room this morning. what a joy it is together to be growing, to be growing in our lives, to make them speak more and more of how we obey Christ, of how we are engaged in actively submitting to his rule and reign together.

Together, as the church here, growing in love for one another, selflessly giving of ourselves to show that love, without thinking of the cost. people measure the health of a church in a myriad of ways, and perhaps one key indicator, as Peter Adam was reminding us just last week, is our prayer life together as a church.

A friend who was here a number of years ago and is now serving elsewhere, said to me recently that the church prayer meetings here often move them to tears, because we love each other, we share burdens, we pray together for the things which cause us pain, for brothers and sisters in distress and grief, and that is not a sign of dysfunction, no, it's a sign of health, it's a sign of exactly what Peter is talking about, growing to brotherly affection, to love, because that kind of prayer is a recognition that this world is not it, that the best is yet to come, our knowledge of God and of his word driving us in love to gather and to pray, to commit these things to the one who is in control of the whole universe, and if we are growing in these qualities, then, says Peter, we will be effective and fruitful as a church, verse 8, if we're growing in love, then the knowledge we share of our Lord Jesus will be fruitful and effective in calling the world to respond, because it is possible to at least appear to have a knowledge of God, to have a knowledge of the Lord Jesus and yet not be fruitful in it.

[33 : 42] That seems to be what is going on in the letter that Peter is writing. People are coming in who seem to have so much, and yet their lives are not bearing fruit.

they're destructive. Verse 9, whoever lacks these qualities is so short-sighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

You see, Peter says we'll become short-sighted, we'll become unable to see what lies ahead, unable to see eternity for all that we'll be concerned with.

All that we can possibly imagine is here and now. We'll think little about the return of Christ if we think about it at all. And we'll grow to believe that there is no judgment coming, that we really can do whatever we want, that God's rule over this world doesn't matter.

And Peter says it gets worse than that, we'll become blind, unable to see God's verdict on this world, unable to see reality, to think that here and now is everything.

[35 : 00] And verse nine, we will become forgetful, forgetting what lies behind, forgetting all that we've been saved from, of how we've been cleansed from our sin.

And that forgetfulness is something we'll see more next week. but for now, see that we must not forget our sins. For if we forget them, then we will become blind to reality.

We won't see ourselves or the world as it really is. And so Peter's great concern is that the church continue to see things as they really are.

And as those who have had their eyes opened, as those who can see clearly, we must take great care to avoid wrong ideas of knowledge.

Therefore, verse 10, the command comes again, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election. For if you practice these qualities, you will never fall. Now, that doesn't mean we'll never sin.

[36 : 04] No, that means we'll never fall from God's grace, from the faith which he's gifted us. But we are to end our Christian lives more grounded, more deeply grounded in the hope in which we started.

And that hope is right there in verse 10, our calling and election. That is God's sovereign choice of us before the creation of the world, called, anchored in Jesus' call to follow him.

One writer says, without contributing anything to our salvation, the acid test of the genuineness of our faith, is that either we make costly life changes on the basis of it, or we treat sin and judgment as irrelevant to a Christian.

That's true for us today. In the church, the evidence that we've been called to be God's children is that we create energy to see these qualities grow amongst us.

And it will be worth it. There will be, verse 11, an entrance richly prepared for us into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

[37 : 21] We, the church, together then are to make every effort. We're to be engaged in growing in the knowledge of God our Savior, growing that knowledge and grace out into brotherly affection, into love.

We're to be fruitful and effective exercising that faith in the church and indeed in the entire world to proclaim to the world the excellencies of God.

And we're to endure, we're to grow right to the end for the Lord Jesus will welcome us with a rich entrance into his eternal kingdom. Friends, the apostle Peter wants us to know that the Lord in his great grace has given us all that we need for life and godliness.

He wants us to know that the end is coming. The Lord Jesus will return to judge this world, to bring his children, those who he has called into his eternal kingdom.

And it is a great joy to do that together in the church, to grow together in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, as together we wait for his coming again in glory.

[38 : 42] Let's pray together. Father God, how we thank you that in the gospel of your Son, our Savior, you have granted to us all that we need for life and godliness.

us. We thank you that your divine power is at work in us to multiply your grace and peace. We ask that you would continually have our eyes not on this life, but on the eternal kingdom, that we may enter it by your grace and sustaining.

For we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you.